

# THEOSOPHY IN ACTION



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## The Ancient Wisdom in the Space Age

EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE AT ST. ANDREWS BY J. S. PERKINS

The most spectacular exploit experienced in the Space Age was the flight of the Apollo II to the Moon. The outstanding event was the view of man's first 'earth-rise': that moment when the astronauts beheld for the first time the planet Earth rising over the edge of the Moon. They saw in a single glance the vision of Earth's beauty and wholeness, uncomplicated and unfragmented, pursuing its orderly course in the black emptiness of space.

However, when they descended and approached the earth this simple vision was fragmented into endless disparities, beginning with the atmospheric shield, its swirling vortices, appearing as currents in some spherical ocean, through which was glimpsed land and continents. Then, as we know, upon nearer approach, the geography becomes mountains and deserts, lakes and rivers, forests and fields, all of the flora and fauna, including the people in races and nations. Descending into these one becomes involved in the cultural systems, the philosophies and religions, the social and economic patterns, the billions of crucial human problems with the syndromes of pain-pleasure-delusion, all the agonies and splendours of human life. Then, upon closer inspection, the whole of this is dispersed into matter that itself divides into molecules, atoms, particles and ultimately into force fields that appear and disappear, seemingly from nowhere and into nothing. Where now is the simple totality that was beheld in a glance when viewed from the moon?

It is from this state of infinite dispersal of life's energies, where we now find ourselves, that we yearn for, and seek, a return to wholeness, the realization of unity. Does not the Ancient Wisdom through its unique arrangement of knowledge and conceptualization regarding primary and secondary creation, and the schemes that are evolving latent potentials, present to the modern world a perspective of totality, a vision of wholeness, just as truly as did the astronauts when they revealed our planetary wholeness as viewed from the moon?

The Stanzas of Dzyan furnish a head-start arrangement, a frame of synthesis, that projects consciousness beyond the gravitational pull of murky materiality; that provides 'escape velocity' through the mental barriers into clearer regions of subtler observation and intuitive perception.

We might note that all enduring civilizations of the past were nourished from a seed-bed of great ideas, the God-ideas, from which the cultural systems blossomed. There are signs of rebirth in this direction. For one thing, Theosophy has been spreading at an increasing pace for nearly a hundred years. We might take firmer cognizance of the remark made by one of the Adepts in The Mahatma Letters: 'The task of the theosophist is to be ever occupied with the divine evolution of ideas'. Certainly those of us who take a long sober look at the plight of mankind find that this is no time to dawdle idly along the by-ways of occultism and mysticism developing our personalities and faculties. Nor is it a time for pre-occupation with systems of thought for their own sake, pitting one authority against another. There can be no authorities when the house of man is in flames.

When we speak of the Ancient Wisdom we are referring to the body of traditional knowledge that can be traced back into

those distant times when, it is said, the One Religion was spread over the whole earth, and the Ancient Mysteries were practised in well established orders, the outer courts of which were opened to all qualified seekers of first-hand knowledge of the world of Reality. Even further into the mists of the past the Ancient Wisdom can be traced to those strange Lemurian Adepts, the androgynous gods, who walked with, and taught primeval man the wisdom that they in turn had received from the great Devas of the Second and the First Races. Moreover, the Ancient Wisdom includes the occultism, the Logos Doctrine, the solar knowledge and the teachings regarding human and divine consciousness as brought to our humanity by the Adepts from the Venus Chain. All of this was taught by voice and ceremonial chanted in Senzar in the Atlantean temples, and later in Sanskrit in the Aryan Mystery schools, echoes of which are today found in the Vedas and Upanishads, the systems of Patanjali and Shankaracharya, and found again in the stanzas and commentaries of *The Secret Doctrine* that today is becoming so widely spread among students.

Today man is faced with the task of precisely controlling matter through the mind, yet of not being trapped in the mind, shut off from the Deva knowledge. A passage in *The Voice of the Silence* spells out the task quite plainly: 'Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and deva wisdom must from thyself be poured forth into another bed'. The bed is that of modern Theosophy.

Modern Theosophy, nourished by the rich background of the Ancient Wisdom, will flower and yield both the seed ideas and the mental climate for those universal men who obviously are arriving, whose thought and action are vitally needed to resolve the political, social and economic stalemates of the present time. But where is the stimulus that will swiftly open the gates of their immortal knowing, or that will unveil their vision of wholeness of Being within its framework of totality, where will such inclusiveness be found if it is not through Theosophy?

Those who have glimpsed totality in the past, even more, have experienced it, have reached the grand achievement of the ages. For, once perceived it is never forgotten; the memory endures the fiery ordeal of rebirth, the searing re-entry to earth life through reincarnation. The seer remembers. He need only be reminded. Once freed by his vision he will ever seek deliverance from the superstitions of any age on earth. The illumined ever find their way back to freedom from the confinements of heredity, race, disciplines, ideologies, and the social and religious exploitations into which they have been born.

From this point of view one perceives the distinctive character of Theosophy. It is not just a miscellaneous body of knowledge, but a significant arrangement of concepts based on first-hand experience of the worlds of Reality. We are reminded of this in Letter 9 of The Mahatma Letters, which informs us that 'For countless generations hath the Adept builded a . . . giant's tower of infinite thought wherein the titan dwelt'. So does every individual build within himself a tower, a giant ladder of consciousness that reaches from where he is to the universal ocean of

## The Ancient Wisdom in the World Today

EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE AT ST. ANDREWS BY CLAIRE WYSS

When we speak of Theosophy we do not think of a particular religion, but rather of the truth that underlies all religions. From another point of view, Theosophy is at once philosophy, religion and science. It can be considered philosophy because the basis of its teachings concerns a Plan of Evolution for all living beings in our solar system. It can be called religion because it shows us a shorter path of evolution leading to a final goal of perfection and encourages us to follow that path. It is science because it does not rely on blind faith but leads man to think and to study for himself, finally to accept only that knowledge of which he has himself experience, which he has discovered for himself through his own investigations.

With the help of this method it tends to awaken the latent powers in man which respond to outer impulses differently in each individual person.

Man has three spiritual bodies and four material ones. These bodies are not separate from one another, they pervade each other and are composed of matter of varying degrees of subtlety. Death means laying aside the physical body. The true man, the ego, is not fundamentally changed or influenced in the process. Theosophy teaches moreover that man is of divine origin and has gone through a long evolutionary development not only in his outer form but also in his soul. A physical life can be compared to a day in the life of man, the soul. We have already lived through many such days and many lie before us. The aim of those lives is to enable us to gather experiences in order to speed up our evolution. This is said to follow a spiral path, which means that man evolves upwards, becoming more subtle and responsive, finally to return, perfected, to the unity from which he set out.

Theosophy also tells of the existence of Perfect Men with whom we can come into contact if we put ourselves at Their disposal. The progress of the world does not take place without guidance; it is under the supervision of a perfectly organised Hierarchy which ensures that in the long run complete failure is impossible.

Students of Theosophy either have reliable knowledge of a thing or they suspend judgement. Of course, beginners in the study of theosophical teachings must rely on books in which such teachings are treated as hypotheses, until such time as they have their own direct experience and can investigate the inner connections for themselves. Theosophy does not attempt to convert, it leaves to each his belief and endeavours to help him to see and recognise in his own religion the truths and beauties which are hidden in it.

A very important aspect of Theosophy is the instruction to students that they should live Theosophy, that they should put into practice in their lives everything into which they have gained insight through study; otherwise it will remain only theory. The *living* of Theosophy is in my opinion the most effective if not the only method of propaganda for our great cause, today as ever.

Theosophy or the Ancient Wisdom proclaims three fundamental truths which, it is said, cannot be lost. We find them in *The Idyll of the White Lotus* by Mabel Collins:

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit. The principle which gives life dwells in us and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception. Each man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

In other words: As man sows, so shall he reap, and since the Ancient Wisdom speaks of a divine Plan whose fulfilment is the purpose of evolution, it is man's duty to co-operate in the execution of that Plan. If he acts in accordance with the laws of the Plan, he will be acting wisely and all be well for him, but if he infringes these laws, knowingly or unknowingly, evolution will be held up and he himself will not know happiness.

In *The Key to Theosophy* it is said that the word Theosophy dates from the third century of our era, from Ammonius Saccas and his disciples, who founded the Eclectic Theosophical System. "The object of this system", says H.P.B., "was to inculcate certain great moral truths upon . . . all those who were 'lovers of the truth'". Hence also the motto adopted by the Theosophical Society: 'There is no religion higher than Truth' . . . "The chief aim of the founders of the Eclectic Theosophical School was one of the three goals of its modern successor, the Theosophical Society, namely to reconcile all religions, sects and nations in a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities".

Let us now ask ourselves to what extent we in the Theosophical Society have put into practice some of these truths in ourselves and in the Society. This question leads us to Theosophy for our time. It seems to me that until every single member tries to live according to theosophical principles and feels himself one with all, the general methods of presentation of our precious philosophy will not be overwhelmingly successful. Only by means of the increasing spiritualisation of every single member can our Society fulfil its mission. We are living in an age of turbulent happenings which almost defy our capacity to cope. They demand of us decisions on the spot. Our power of discrimination is put to a hard test. We must act and prove our worth in accordance with the guiding principles of the Ancient Wisdom.

There is throughout the world an intense search for new ideals. Could not Theosophy prove to be a 'new' ideal? Since our Society proclaims this old but ever new philosophy, ways should be found to make it appear more attractive. As the success of a cause is said to depend on the individual representing it, we might well try to formulate a description of a typical representative of the Theosophical Society, as he should be. Here again there is no one rule, except that such an individual could not do otherwise than devote his personal life and whole being to the universal ideal. With him that ideal would come first, that is, he would be selfless. We must once again become pioneers as H.P.B. and her friends were. This applies to the young as well as to the older people, perhaps more so to the young, for it is they who will have to

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## Ancient Wisdom and Modern Folly

Extracts from a Lecture at St. Andrews by L. H. Leslie-Smith

We suffer today from the results of bitter differences caused by events of long ago, which should have been forgotten but which instead have been carefully fostered. We have the capacity to understand one another, yet we go out of our way to misunderstand. Why all the international strife, and internal contention in every nation? The answer is that nations, groups within nations, are self-seeking, greedy, ruthless, because individual man is selfish and ready to exploit his fellows as well as the other kingdoms of nature. But this merely prompts the further fundamental question: What folly drives men to behave in a separative manner when the Wisdom shows that all life is one and that mankind is a unity because, as the third fundamental proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* puts it, of the 'fundamental identity of all souls with the Universal Over-Soul'? My suggested answer is: the pollution of the total human environment, not just the physical, but also the psychic and spiritual environment.

There is a long history of exploitation and pollution of our earth, but earth's bounty was not too cruelly abused until after the Industrial Revolution. Again, men polluted the environment for themselves by lack of sanitation and cleanliness. This defilement brought disease, but Public Health departments have changed all that.

Rather late, something is being done about the adulteration of land, water and air by chemical spraying, effluents, radioactive matter, sewage and oil. But usually only when people are alarmed for their safety does anyone care. How much wiser and simpler it would be if we could recognize our obligations to our fellows and to nature without being spurred by fear. Some positive principle needs to be applied to all situations instead of negative prohibition after the damage has been done.

To theosophists that principle is obvious. The first fact about nature is its wholeness and mutual dependence of all parts on each other and their relation to the whole. Only if, as *The Voice of the Silence* puts it, we help nature and work with her will she regard us as creators and make obeisance.

Psychic adulteration comes from crooked thinking, warped feeling. Our whole upbringing, home, education, social circumstances and national attitudes make deep impressions on us and tend to mould the psyche to a shape that others think it should be. Custom, convention, modes of thought and conduct put inexorable group pressure on us to conform to pattern from the cradle to the crematorium. If we rebel we are again conditioned by the very act of revolt. The very soil of our native land, its physical formation and climate have a profound effect on our physical appearance, our outlook, our character. Add to that the overwhelming aura of the mental-emotional atmosphere of our particular nation, created by generations of our forbears, the cumulative result of the nation's history.

Enmity instead of friendliness vitiates the psychic environment. There is hope, however. Leading thinkers, eminent lecturers, philosophers, scientists, idealists in many parts of the world now talk about man's responsibility for his future. Until men realize that duties alone can justify rights, they cannot properly take charge of their own evolution, which they now have to do. Psychic pollution inhibits it.

The Wisdom gives the key: All is One, One Being. Earth has shrunk by modern communications to be one world. Nations work together reluctantly for trade and travel. Statesmen will eventually be forced to see that in the long run the only way to benefit one's country is to work for the welfare of the world.

A vision of the whole gives the fundamental principles for living, which the various religions should have provided in an acceptable form. H. P. Blavatsky said that religion 'is that which binds all men... all beings and all things in the entire world into one grand whole'. Which is why Theosophy is not a religion, but Religion itself. That brings us to the spiritual pollution of the human environ-

ment. The boundary between psychic and spiritual pollution is not easy to define. They impinge on each other and strongly affect each other.

Today men think they know a thing when they know only about it. All the wonderful knowledge of the phenomenal world is but a shadow of the noumenal, that inner world of life that holds the forms together. One cannot claim to know a person because one has compiled a great dossier about him. The superb discovery about genes and chromosomes does but show the mechanism of heredity. Men seem to have lost the knowledge given in the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'Higher, deeper, innermost abides another life, not like the life of sense'—an inner world of direct perception where truth abides, an inner life common to all men, shared by all, where our roots are, where we belong. Refusal to recognize this heritage of all men, in fact 'the great dire heresy of separateness', constantly wrecks the spiritual environment. The spirit itself cannot be polluted, but the unfolding of its powers may be sadly hampered.

The most vicious form of spiritual pollution of the human environment takes the form of believing that 'my religion' (whichever it might be) is true and others false. From this has sprung the black record of the wars of religion. But it can also be 'my philosophy', 'my ideology' and alas 'my Theosophy'.

The Wisdom came to us in modern times chiefly through H. P. Blavatsky. She and her teachers gave some of the fundamental principles of the Esoteric Philosophy, the Ancient, Ageless Wisdom, not some new teaching. We need, therefore, to beware of confusing what she called the 'Eternal Verities' with the words in which they are of necessity imperfectly expressed. This applies without exception to all theosophical writings. No theosophical doctrine must become a creed, no theosophical book a bible. Writing of her books a short time before her death, H. P. Blavatsky said that half a dozen theosophists had been busy editing *The Secret Doctrine* and had helped prepare it for the printer. Since the original manuscript has vanished it is impossible to point to any sentence and be 100 per cent certain that it is exactly as she wrote it, or as the Masters corrected it. So 'the fundamental doctrine, the philosophical conclusions and teachings' must be distinguished from their verbal wrappings. No theosophist can say truly 'The way I look at it is right'. That is polluting the environment.

We have part only of the teaching. Further knowledge could give a different slant. Apparently contradictory views may prove to be but different aspects of a truth. Truth is paradoxical. Seeming discrepancies may presently be resolved, even where they are not just a matter of terminology. No one has said, or ever will say, the last word on Theosophy, and blindly to follow a first leader or any other leader pollutes the spiritual environment in the search for Truth.

If we keep an awareness of the whole, we may escape being theosophically separate. It is tempting to think that the little we have apprehended of the Wisdom is Theosophy, and what another member understands is not. The way to avoid this conditioning or to remedy it is to transcend the mental activity that divides and go inwards to that spiritual centre beyond the mind where we are all one. There we may find illumination. There will arise a tolerance and humility, the prime need of all human relationships, personal and corporate. From there we can direct life in knowledge of what is ephemeral and what eternal—heart and mind aligned to cooperation, mutual service, goodwill, kindness. This is Theosophy in action. This is the only remedy for the ills that beset mankind, the one thing necessary to clean away all that pollutes the human environment, spiritual, psychological, physical.

"If the attitude is wholly one of giving, all problems are bound cease. In such an attitude is true dignity".

N. SRI RAM

## The Challenge of Man's Relationship

EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE AT ST. ANDREWS BY KATHRINE PERKINS

In a world that grows ever smaller through modern communication systems, the individual is no longer isolated. We learn about what is happening all over the world, and even outside the earth's environment, almost instantaneously. But there is no instant understanding in our relationship to men, to nature or to the subtle levels of consciousness in both man and nature.

Life at present is pressing man to understand his relationships broadly and deeply. Theories and concepts of the mind are not enough. This is being discovered by perceptive and sensitive individuals in many walks of life. For instance, Dr. Glen Seaborg, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission in the U.S.A., thinks the computer is a challenge to us and that its ultimate potential puts us to the test as human beings. 'It gives us new freedom yet tremendous responsibilities'... so 'there is need for a huge re-evaluation of our goals and values'.

Man's relationship is a world problem, but the world is made up of individuals, so the challenge is essentially to the individual. It is the individual who may meet life deeply, directly, without barriers, fears or preconceptions who may learn the meaning of co-operation and accept the responsibilities and opportunities before him now, or who may withdraw from the world, whether psychologically or socially and let life's challenges pass him by.

When we joined the Theosophical Society we gave our approval of the three Objects, and usually consider ourselves committed to the first Object. It seems to me that 'to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, caste, sex or colour' is an active directive. With our knowledge and experience of Theosophy we must ask ourselves: what is our comprehension of race—our attitude to racism; of the religious upheaval of our time, of stratified society, whether we call it caste or class, of the situation of men and women today.

In *Light on the Path* four deceptively simple rules seem particularly meaningful in the crisis that face us at present:

'Regard earnestly all the life that surrounds you. Learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men. Regard most earnestly your own heart... Regard the constantly changing moving life which surrounds you, for it is formed by the hearts of men; and as you learn to understand their constitution and meaning you will by degrees be able to read the larger word of life'.

Four meanings of the word 'regard' appeared in one dictionary: (1) look upon with particular feeling; (2) respect; (3) look at; (4) concern. A particular feeling may be described as brotherhood, unity, love. Respect surely means for all life. We need to look at the life that surrounds us without judging, comparing or interpreting it. We need sometimes to look at life as if we had never seen it before, clearly, freshly, not trying to see something in particular. When our minds are not crammed with thoughts or plans sometimes a person or a scene will suddenly come alive and we will see them as never before.

The fourth meaning, concern, is called 'care' by Krishnaji. 'Observation demands care. Care means sympathy, affection, like caring for a child. You observe the child. You do not compare him. You watch him endlessly with affection, with understanding'.

It is suggested in *Light on the Path* that we regard earnestly the life around us, that is that we are serious in our inquiry, our examination, our observation of life. Earnestly or seriously does not mean devoid of a sense of humour. We need to laugh with others and at ourselves, at our fears and foibles, our own peculiarities particularly. However, it does mean that we intend to go to the very root of things and find Truth for ourselves.

Truth like Life is movement, and so we are always uncovering fresh, new aspects of Truth if we are serious. We all want to 'learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men', but how can we know if we are intelligent in viewing our fellow

men? What is intelligence? According to one definition it is the capacity to learn and understand. But intelligence does not come from mere mental knowledge and information. Intelligence comes with a total sensitivity of our mind, of our heart with its infinite capacity for affection, generosity and goodwill; and with intense feeling for all life, for the beautiful and the ugly.

What is life trying to teach us today? What is the nature of the changes taking place in the world now?

H.P.B. said in 1888: 'Since the Society was founded, a distinct change has come over the spirit of the age. Those who gave us commission to found the Society foresaw this now rapidly growing wave of transcendental influence following the other wave of mere phenomenalism... What is the spirit of this age? In our recent tour of the U.S.A. we saw tremendous changes since our last visit five years before. The U.S.A. has been very much shaken in the last years by the tragedies that have taken place, by the riots, the revolt of youth, by racism. There is more self-criticism and more dialogue between people of different opinions and outlooks. Then too we heard from some that there was a great change in the response to the occasions demanding moral sympathy; that the young are no longer roused to action by an abstract ideal, but do the work they do for the sake of the people they are able to help'.

Some young people the world over are interested in bringing about a new world with a deepening appreciation of the real values in life. It is as if they have decided to proceed by individual acts bearing witness to beliefs, rather than to make public statements about beliefs. Is this the spirit of the age trying to emerge: to live truth as one sees it instead of talking much about it? Frankly, I do not know.

Uplheaval in the religions and theological unrest is observed in many parts of the world, and many feel that the religions have not solved man's problems. Yet Krishnaji says: 'The religious mind alone can solve the problems of man', and he describes a religious mind as a creative mind in which a total mutation has taken place. He says: 'The religious mind has the capacity to act totally, not in fragments, not in divisions... such a mind essentially has beauty and that sense of love which alone binds action to the whole...'

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the individual is to 'regard most earnestly' his 'own heart'. We cannot understand others if we do not understand ourselves, but we hear the words 'Know yourself' so often that it has become a kind of cliché, without meaning. However, being the basis for all our action, we cannot escape the fundamental nature of the advice to know oneself, to constantly discover oneself. We face a challenge in our relation with ourselves as well as with others: the ordinary everyday self, and the inner spiritual self, and we meet this challenge in a state of aloneness, of silence, in meditation, as well as in our relations with others.

To be related is to work together, to co-operate with each other. We cannot co-operate if one dominates the other or forces his ideas on another. Co-operation means a real sense of togetherness, of affection. So we come back to the word 'care' or 'concern'. 'Regard the constantly changing moving life...' with the feeling that is brotherhood, unity, love, respect. Observe it with clarity, intelligence, sensitivity, ever freshly and with concern.

As we explore and examine the challenges before us today and become more and more aware of what is taking place in the world, in our fellow men, in our own consciousness and in nature, we may realize the opportunities and responsibilities before us as individuals to meet these challenges creatively with understanding and insight.

### A GOOD IDEA

Some of our readers are in the habit of giving subscriptions to *Theosophy In Action* as Christmas or New Year presents. The editor would be both delighted and grateful if more would acquire this excellent habit!



## REINCARNATION IN THE WEST TODAY

By GRETA EEDLE

One of the questions put in *The Key to Theosophy*, first published in 1889, reads:

The most difficult thing for you to do will be to explain and give reasonable grounds for such a belief (i.e. rebirth). No theosophist has ever yet succeeded in bringing forward a single valid proof to shake my scepticism. First of all, you have against this theory of reincarnation the fact that no single man has yet been found to remember that he has lived, least of all who he was, during his previous life.

And to this and others on this topic Madame Blavatsky answers that only Buddhas and Initiates can remember their past lives.

There could be no more striking illustration than this statement of the difference between the second half of the 19th and the second half of the 20th century. Many thousands of children have been born since the 1939-45 war with memories of battle scenes and the like, which they describe, and then forget at around six years of age. One such boy, known to me, after telling a graphic story of close fighting (of which no knowledge could possibly have come to him from any source) when asked what happened then, answered: 'I don't know, I must have gone to sleep.' What better confirmation of the theosophical teaching on death and sleep could one wish to have?

A girl, born in 1949 in the heart of the Swedish countryside, where nobody knew anything about war, suffered from terrible dreams of battles and other horrors from early childhood onwards, and only learnt that such a thing as war existed when she was much older. Significantly, she has become a nurse.

Many F.T.S. must have come across such children during the last twenty years. Their parents do not publicise the strange stories they tell, and so it is difficult to collect them in the way that similar cases can be documented in countries where reincarnation is a common belief.

Readers of this paper may be acquainted with the pamphlet *The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of former Incarnations* by Dr. Ian Stevenson, of the School of Medicine, University of Virginia, U.S.A., in which he summarises twenty-eight cases of claimed memories of former incarnations in which it was possible to identify the apparently remembered person. Most of these come from the east and some date from earlier in this century, such as the now famous one of Shanti Devi, born in 1926. An outstanding one is that of the French clairvoyant, Madame Laura Raynaud, who not only sought and found the place of her former life, but was convinced that her previous body had been buried in a church and not in a cemetery as was the general custom. This proved to be correct, and shows that some of us take a friendly interest in what happened to our last 'suit of cast-off clothes.'

Again, compared with a century ago, there has been a great change in the outlook of the spiritualists. At the time *The Key to Theosophy* was written only those groups considered reincarnation a possibility if this thought was held in the mental atmosphere around them. This meant that over large geographical areas of the western world they refused to consider the possibility. Today, groups in most places are studying reincarnation and karma, and the teaching is increasingly accepted by them, no doubt reinforced by many in the movement who themselves remember a past life.

In 1954 a group of clergymen and laymen interested in psychical research formed in London the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies. This is open to any member of a church affiliated to the World Council of Churches. In a recent booklet, *Religious Aspects of Extra-Sensory Perception*, by Dr. Arthur Guirdham, a senior consultant in psychiatry, a number of cases of people who remember a previous life are cited. Not all of these are recent incarnations, and one refers to the 13th century. This author makes two notable observations. One is that certain psychological states needing treatment cannot have arisen from causes experienced in this life and therefore lead back to a previous life. The other is that all those who have direct

memories are serious, religious people, devoted to christian ideals and ethics. Incidentally, the contents of this booklet have been given publicity by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The difference between Madame Blavatsky's statement that only an ego advanced on the path of spirituality can remember previous incarnations, and the accumulating evidence that simple souls all over the world do have these memories today is one which needs examination.

In the latter case, especially of very rapid rebirth, one can assume that the ego has not discarded the mental and astral bodies from which a previous physical body has been suddenly and prematurely cut off, and therefore comes into the new body with memory not much impaired. These children (or adults, if memories persist), however, only remember the one preceding life. It is possible, even probable, that once this wave of rapid rebirths (which may also be one of the reasons for the present population explosion) has subsided, children with such memories will no longer be born, provided we do not have another large-scale war in which millions of young bodies are again sacrificed. The fact that there are now in incarnation a considerable number of those who remember one short past life does not alter the fundamental teaching that only an ego advanced in spirituality has the capacity of reviewing a series of past lives. So whilst the present spate of one-life memories serves to convince millions of the truth of reincarnation, the fullness of the deep implications of this truth has yet to be appreciated, both in the west and in the east.

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tread the new paths. But the task of finding new paths must be undertaken by all, working together. Young people have the courage to begin to build anew in every sphere, but the experience of the older people can provide their courage with a basis and give it a quality of stability.

Theosophy is something dynamic and young, but it demands that the individual devote his whole life to it. It is a fact that organisations become with time crystallised and lose their original vitality. But that does not mean that they are useless. Everything can be regenerated, we can learn from our mistakes and build anew with the material available. Here again I should like to appeal to the young people to help us to bring new blood into the Society and to work together with those members who are perhaps old in years but are young in spirit in order to bring real theosophists to the Society, people who are filled with the idea of the Ancient Wisdom and also live it. I think that then the Society would become attractive in a very special way. We are approaching the last quarter of the century, when it is said that a spiritual outpouring will take place, and at the same time our Society will be celebrating its 100th anniversary. Is this not the moment to give the Society a new impulse?

The teachings of the Ancient Wisdom will remain alive and modern as long as we live them according to our own capabilities and opportunities. We can extend and strengthen these capabilities and opportunities if we free ourselves somewhat from outer things and are no longer dependent on them. This does not mean that we should turn away from the world, on the contrary, we must come to terms with it and deal with its needs without identifying ourselves with it. Only this can we be of use. By travelling the path that leads within ourselves we can come closer to the world, we can understand its needs and its suffering better and be more helpful.

I should like to close by asking you to do all in your power to lighten a little the karma of the world at the present time. How can we best do that? By supporting and strengthening the Good, the True and the Beautiful which is there, in spite of all. This we can do only if we are true, good and beautiful within ourselves. This is what the Ancient Wisdom demands of us today, indeed in all ages past and to come.

## The Psychic Factor

EXTRACTS FROM A LECTURE AT ST. ANDREWS BY DR. H. SHEARMAN

Many people first approach Theosophy and the Theosophical Society from the starting point of some experience of or interest in a psychic factor which enters the lives of very many people at some point.

All psychic experience falls into two classes. There are those which happen to oneself and those which are described by or other people. It is only through the first class that we can begin to appreciate the meaning and value of the second.

Quite a minor and unspectacular experience of a psychic nature can carry profound implications. In the moment of experience one does not need an explanation. One lets it happen as a child does. Afterwards one asks oneself what it was that happened and what it was really like. To make this enquiry it is well to put aside what one has read in books.

Every psychic experience has at its heart a certain mystical quality, a moment of being at one with something larger than oneself. This is then externalised in one of those secondary phenomena, such as clairvoyance, precognition or one of those other things that are described in books and tested by researchers.

It is the primary element in the experience which is significant. But, since the world is drunk with information and unable to think except in terms of information, people seek to measure all psychic experiences by the criterion of whether their secondary manifestations are true; and the primary element is totally neglected or virtually denied.

One might say that the secondary effects represent the experience that we have, but the primary element is the experience that has us. What is important is the quality of an experience rather than its particulars.

The secondary material that surfaces is often humanly true without necessarily being objectively true. A factor of human relationship is often crucial to an experience; and efforts to segregate clairvoyance or other demonstrations of psychism from their human setting, for the purpose of submitting them to objective tests, has often caused them to cease altogether or to lose their quality. The conclusions drawn from this are often quite unjust to the psychic.

It is hard to convey any notion of the primary source of an experience, as distinct from the secondary factual, or informative aspect that it may have. What is important is not the thing seen, but the darkness from which it emerges. In pursuing, in an accumulative spirit, some secondary matter, such as the factual details contained in a real or supposed memory of a past life, we neglect the real message which such a memory carries for us, and the merely factual side really does nothing for us. If we can experience or intuit the mysterious ambience of an inner world out of which such an experience emerges, then we may be changed in a significant way. It is the breakthrough of a deeper order of experience that is important and not the secondary effects which it may leave in memory at our habitual level of experience.

In many types of mediumship, a flow of secondary effects is produced without the individual concerned having access to the primary experience; and this makes it a sterile pursuit.

If we make due allowance for the idiom and mode of expression in those chapters which occur in several of Bishop Leadbeater's books, on how to become clairvoyant, we shall find them basically true. He recommends moving towards a different order of experience by transforming the whole quality of our relationship with others. He also recommends meditation; but it must be a quality of meditation which brings about release from personality, not a form of withdrawal into personality. It is probably because prayer presupposes an effort to go out towards something beyond personality that it is more effective for many people than efforts at so-called meditation.

A great part of the literature which has grown up in the Theosophical Society during nearly a century has been in some respects based upon somebody's psychic experiences. If we demand that it should embody some kind of self-consistent system, or if we reject some part of it on the ground that it is not consistent with some other part, we are approach-

ing it with a wrong expectation. Theosophical literature is like a great outpouring from what some psychologists might call the collective unconscious of humanity. It has the richness and the contrasts and contradictions of something living and organic. Complete consistency is the mark of death.

If there is a point of reconciliation, it does not exist at a level accessible to that mind in us which deals with things in terms of analysis and comparison. It exists rather at a deep level beyond that mind, in the primary darkness from which these secondary products emerge.

In a limited sense Theosophy may, for some, be "a body of teachings"; but those teachings are secondary products of a primary Theosophy which is a living and indwelling wisdom. That primary Theosophy can depend upon no outer or verbal authority nor can it be contained within any system or any literature.

The Theosophical Society must remain a body in which experiences may be freely communicated and talked about with that "courtesy and consideration" which is commended to us by our General Council; and we are bound to reject any idea that experiences or descriptions of experiences can be ruled out or treated in some fashion as heresy on the ground that they are inconsistent with some authority past or present. In the nature of things it is wisest to regard all communications of experience as indicative rather than definitive.

The Theosophical Society does not exist to provide people with opinions about psychic realms or to reject or endorse any opinions they may already have. In the declared Objects of the Society in 1878, the first Object was "To keep alive in man his spiritual intuition". Although the official Objects of the Society have since been given a very different form, it will surely be felt that that early view of our purpose still underlies our Objects today.

## PROFESSOR GEORGES MÉAUTIS

The above, a former General Secretary of the Society in Switzerland, has died in his 80th year. In addition to his work for the Society, he was an internationally well known scholar and writer of excellent books (*The Mysteries of Eleusis*, etc.) and will be remembered with gratitude by the many who benefited from his philosophy.

## MRS. A. LAVENDER BERRY

The English Section has also lost a former General Secretary and distinguished member in the passing of Mrs. Berry in her 91st year. She was a profound student and keen observer as well as a superb lecturer with a rare gift for making obscure and difficult concepts clear. She served the Society in many ways for many years.

## AN APPEAL

At the recent Council meeting in St. Andrews it was noticed that the circulation of *Theosophy in Action* is much larger in those countries where there is an agent than in the others. The countries in which we should particularly welcome an agent are: Africa, Canada, Central and South America, Iceland, Israel, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden and Yugoslavia.

The main work is to collect subscriptions and remit them to the Business Management once a year, and, if opportunities occur, to promote sales. We should be glad if any of our readers in these countries would volunteer. The task is not at all onerous!

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Being the One Life realized. Slowly, throughout the ages, we are accomplishing this task, remembering the totality in each experience and correcting our unfolding vision. This is eventually why we must preserve the continuity between the Ancient Wisdom and the expression of Theosophy in this Space Age, whether or not the Age receives it. For Theosophy is a timeless wisdom expressed in knowledge fields that change with the seasons.



## SUMMER SCHOOL OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING REGION

ST. ANDREWS, SCOTLAND, 8-15 AUGUST

Theme: FROM THE ANCIENT WISDOM TO MODERN THEOSOPHY

"Theosophy must be practical... it has to find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life impregnated with its spirit—the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity and love".

*Letter from a Master of the Wisdom.*

In a very intensive week of lectures, study and discussion it was clear from the contributions of most of the speakers that the above instruction, quoted by one of them, was never far from their minds. Serious efforts were made by all, whether lecturers or listeners, to translate the "head knowledge" at our disposal into "Soul Wisdom". 197 members attended, coming from the British Isles, the Scandinavian countries, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the U.S.A., the ages ranging from 13 to 93.

The Guests of Honour, Mr. J. S. Perkins, international Vice-President, and Mrs. K. Perkins, as well as the Chairman, Mrs. C. Wyss, led the School with their individual inspiring approach to the Wisdom, and the other speakers each struck their own note, thus adding something to our knowledge and understanding. Mr. Perkins brought the personal greetings of the President, Mr. N. Sri Ram.

In her Opening Address Mrs. C. Wyss said:

'The world has always changed, but never so swiftly as now, whilst mankind becomes increasingly unhappy. Our purpose is to change the world from conflict to harmony, so we need first to change ourselves. Books and lectures are useful, but cannot replace the living example. This week of harmonious communal living may help us to respect other points of view and thereby help to solve the world problem.'

The following lectures will be published in full in *The Theosophist*, and it is hoped that every member will make a point of reading them during the coming months:

An Approach to Non-Time Reality, by Mr. J. S. Perkins;

Man, Science and the Wisdom Teachings, by Dr. C. G. Trew;

The Ageless Wisdom, by Mr. V. W. Slater;

Individuals and Societies, by Madame H. Sabatay;

Looking Out, by Dr. N. Lauppert.

Summaries of the following lectures are in this issue:

The Ancient Wisdom in the Space Age, by Mr. J. S. Perkins;

The Challenge of Man's Relationship, by Mrs. K. Perkins;

The Ancient Wisdom in the World Today, by Mrs. C. Wyss.

Ancient Wisdom and Modern Folly, by Mr. L. H. Leslie-Smith;

The Psychic Factor, by Dr. H. Shearman;

In the next issue we hope to publish summaries of 'Some Thoughts on Silence' by Mr. S. Hjalmarsson, 'The Indirect Way' by Mr. C. Berg, and of the symposia, 'Modern Theosophy', 'The Ancient Wisdom' and 'Why Theosophy?'

In his lecture 'The Source of the Ancient Wisdom' Mr. G. Barborka gave some of the sources of great antiquity on which the writings of H. P. Blavatsky were based.

Mr. G. Eedle, in 'Making Theosophy Known', pointed out the fact that it was so little known, etc. that so many mistaken ideas about the Society were current in the world. In an effort to make the teachings more widely known, the English Section has arranged the following study courses:

Introductory Course on Theosophy;  
Fundamentals Course;  
Theosophical Self-training Course;  
Secret Doctrine Reading Course;  
Self-Enlightenment Course;  
Public Meditation Material.

There were seven study and discussion groups, with three meetings each, which gave all the participants the opportunity of giving their views and widening their understanding. These were on:

Powers Latent in Man;  
Through the Eyes of Science;  
Demonstration of Study Courses;  
Current Topics and Problems;  
History and the Theosophical Society;  
The Spiritual Basis of Consciousness;  
Studies in *The Secret Doctrine*.

## COUNCIL MEETINGS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN EUROPE HELD DURING THE BRITISH REGIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL IN ST. ANDREWS, SCOTLAND (8th-15th AUGUST, 1970)

The first Council Meeting, held on 9th August, was as usual open to all members. The Chairman of the Council, Mrs. Claire Wyss, welcomed all present and conveyed greetings from Mr. John Coats, from the American and Australian sections and from other members unable to be present. General Secretaries then gave reports on the work in their sections.

The open meeting was followed on 10th and 11th August by two business meetings at which the usual items were dealt with: the adoption of the Chairman's and Treasurer's Annual Reports and the Accounts, discussion of the work in different language regions, future work etc. The work in different language regions includes summer schools, the publication of books in French, German, Italian, Dutch, and the Scandinavian languages etc. and the magazines of the different regions. The Federation magazine, "Theosophy in Action" was of course also discussed.

In dealing with finances, it was agreed that, if at some time a donation was received for this purpose, a European "Lecturers' Travelling Fund" could be started. Such a fund would meet a real need.

Some dates of summer schools planned for 1971 were already available:

11th-16th June:	Iceland
End of June/Beginning of July:	Sweden
30th July-6th August:	England (Nottingham)

First or second week of August:	Denmark
September:	German region (Pichl, Austria)
24th May for three weeks:	Huizen—a Seminar by Mr. G. Hodson

Regarding the 1971 European Congress, it was felt by many members that the dates proposed (17th to 25th September 1971) were too late in the season, but it would be impossible to arrange for a Congress in Switzerland earlier in the summer. It was therefore decided that enquiries would be made as to whether the Congress could be held in Paris, preferably from about 8th to 15th August. The President and Mrs. Radha Burnier would be guest speakers. (The "Congress Committee" also met during the St. Andrews summer school and adopted the keynote "Man's Inner Resources". Members will be asked to co-operate in studying the field of the keynote beforehand.)

Work on the two books which will be published on the occasion of the Centenary of the Society—a book of articles and a history of the movement—was reported to be progressing.

*Continued from previous column*

The Federation Council met several times and a report of their conclusions is above. The film of the American Section "How Many Lives?" was shown and was recommended, where suitable, for publicity purposes.

The splendid selection of books for sale which had been brought from London by Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell was much appreciated.

Diversions were provided by a visit to a demonstration of Scottish Dancing one evening, and by coach excursions to places of interest on two afternoons. The town of St. Andrews also provided much of historical interest, and occasional relaxation by the sea. Whilst the oldest University building dates from the year 1411 we ourselves were housed in the latest hall of residence, opened in 1969, each in a whitewashed room with all modern comforts, but strongly reminiscent of a monk's cell.

In her Closing Address the Chairman thanked our host, the Scottish Section, in the person of its General Secretary, Miss Carstairs, for giving us such kind hospitality. She also gave warm thanks to Mrs. Doris Slater, the British Regional Secretary, and her husband, for all the trouble they and Miss Carstairs had taken to organise the School so perfectly.

## Extracts from the Chairman's Annual Report of the Theosophical Society in Europe 1969/70

I should like to begin with the principal event of the year for the T.S. in Europe: the annual meetings of the European Council held in July 1969 during the summer school of the Scandinavian sections at Bohusgarden near Uddevalla. At the Council Meeting the following sections were represented by their General Secretaries and, in some cases, by delegates: England, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Scotland, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark and Wales. France, Italy, Finland, Belgium, Greece and Yugoslavia had appointed proxies. Miss T. Fleetwood represented the Young Theosophists. The European Executive Committee also met during the Scandinavian summer school in July and again in January 1970 at St. Michael's, Huizen. Meetings of the Scandinavian Regional Committee took place also in Uddevalla. We were fortunate in having the International President, N. Sri Ram, and his daughter, Radha Burnier, General Secretary of India, as guests. This gave the school a very special character and the lectures of the President and his daughter were among the highlights of the gathering.

The President also took part in the English summer school and, later on, in the Pays Latins school in Brussels. We are very grateful to him for kindly accepting various invitations to attend summer schools, for he brings a very special note to all the gatherings which he attends and he links the members present with our International Headquarters in Adyar.

There was also a summer school in Germany (at Hustedt), presided by the General Secretary and very well attended.

The German Regional Summer School, which is held each year in Pichl, Austria, was presided by the Chairman of the Council and was also well attended.

The Icelandic Section has a new General Secretary. We are grateful to the previous General Secretary for his work and send Mrs. Fells our best wishes for happy and successful activity.

My most cordial thanks go to my closest co-workers: Dr. N. Lauppert, the Vice-Chairman, whose advice is very precious on many occasions; Miss M. Anderson, who is for me the "perfect secretary"; Mrs. G. Eedle, without whom *Theosophy in Action* would not be what it is today; my other helpers in England. I should also like to mention the harmonious co-operation between Miss Ilse von Tresckow, the Treasurer, and myself. And my thanks to those friends in the whole of Europe who help me with their understanding and their friendship.

There is good news of the various Conventions held in different sections: France, Yugoslavia, Finland, Switzerland, England, Italy etc.

The new Besant Hall in Huizen is practically complete at the time of writing and will certainly prove a very beautiful building. Gifts are still welcome, as construction proved dearer than was originally expected.

International lecturers were active in various sections. To cite some examples: First of all, our International President visited, as mentioned above, the summer schools in Sweden, England and Belgium. Mrs. Radha Burnier accompanied her father to Sweden and England. The lecture tour of Professor B. R. Mullik through many sections was a great success. Miss I. Hoskins, on her way back from Adyar (where she was Director of Studies at the School of the Wisdom), held short courses and gave public lectures in French in various towns in Switzerland. Within an area where the same language is understood, speakers are very often invited to visit lodges in other countries. Professor E. Cusani (Italy) visited Switzerland, Mr. G. Tripet (Switzerland) France, Professor K. Schmidt (Germany) visited Yugoslavia and Switzerland, etc. Such invitations often arise spontaneously and are very useful, due not only to the lecture material presented but also to the contacts made. I do not always hear of such "spontaneous" lecture tours, but the important thing is that they take place. Mrs. Rukmini Devi Arundale will be present in

Huizen in July for the inauguration of the Besant Hall.

The undersigned took part in the summer schools in Sweden, Belgium and Austria. She undertook a short lecture tour to Austria and Germany. In November she presided over a German Regional Committee Meeting in Munich, which was also attended by the Vice-Chairman and the General Secretaries of Germany and Switzerland. In January she was at Huizen for the Executive Committee meeting and in March she accepted an invitation to the Convention of the Finnish Section in Helsinki, where she held a lecture and spoke to the Young Theosophists.

I have just learned that there is a new General Secretary in Denmark. Our best wishes go to Mr. Preben Sorensen and our thanks to Mr. Niels Sorensen for his work.

There is nothing very spectacular to report within our Society in Europe in the period under review. But everywhere work continues steadily, everywhere there is enthusiasm for Theosophy, especially in little groups which are more or less thrown back on their own resources. One has the impression that in such groups the theosophical truths are held in great esteem and deeply understood; they are lived rather than talked about. In the summer schools too spiritual forces concentrate spontaneously and the living together for some days of different people who have the same ideal influences theosophical work very positively. Work in the lodges too, which is based on short talks and discussions rather than on long lectures, helps to make life in our Society more dynamic and better adapted to modern needs. Although not many young people are joining our ranks, the few who do so bring vitality and they ensure that our connection with the world in which we have to live and work is never severed. If we all open ourselves to the influences from the spiritual world—which will be particularly strong in coming years—and become channels for these forces, through which they can stream out to suffering humanity, then we shall contribute to fulfilling the mission of the Society.

CLAIRE WYSS, Chairman of the Council.

## BOOK REVIEWS

SEEKING WISDOM. N. Sri Ram. T.P.H. London. 14s.

This is a compilation of fifteen articles contributed to *The Theosophist* by the President from July 1968 to December 1969. There are penetrating analyses of the progression of the changing self, virtue, death, the paths of yoga and many other aspects of the whole man, clothed in simple language, but replete with meaning and wisdom. He writes:

"What we think to be possible as a condition attainable in oneself and extremely desirable can be attained, because it indicates that the inner condition is already present somewhere within oneself and one is aware of it".

G. EEDLE.

H. P. BLAVATSKY, THE LIGHT BRINGER. Geoffrey A. Barborka. T.P.H., London. 5s.

The Blavatsky Lecture was instituted by The Theosophical Society in England in 1917 "... and shall take the form of a speech or paper based on some original research in connection with the writings of Madame Blavatsky".

Mr. Barborka has however restricted himself to giving an interesting outline of Madame Blavatsky's background, unique personality and work, under such headings as: H.P.B.'s Literary Achievements; Writing by Instruction, by Dictation, by Directive Clairvoyance, by Psychometry, by Precipitation, etc. There is a list of all her works and a glossary. The lecture is compiled from published literature and will be found an instructive 'digest' by recently joined members, and an appropriate answer to Madame Blavatsky's detractors, but for the older student there is nothing new.

G. EEDLE.